
Prevention of Skin Cancer by Reducing Exposure to UV Light through Educational and Policy Approaches in Recreational or Tourism Settings

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the United States. The strongest, preventable risk factor for developing skin cancer is exposure to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays. However, at least 50% of adults do not protect themselves adequately from UV exposure. While knowledge of the risk of sun exposure and the use of sunscreen and other forms of sun protection have improved over the past two decades, a gap still exists between knowledge and behavior. The question is, what are effective strategies to improve adults' sun protective behaviors?

A systematic review of published studies, conducted on behalf of the Task Force on Community Preventive Services by a team of experts, found that educational and policy approaches in recreational or tourism settings, such as pools or parks are effective in improving adults' "covering up" behavior wearing protective clothing such as a shirt, long pants, and hat. Sunscreen use was considered a secondary outcome meaning that a change in sunscreen use alone would not result in a recommendation but it should have accompanied improvements in "covering up" behavior. Based on this review, the **Task Force recommends that this strategy be implemented on the basis of sufficient evidence of effectiveness.**

Background on educational and policy approaches in recreational or tourism settings

- Interventions in recreational or tourism settings were designed to increase sun-protective knowledge, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors among adults and children.
- Interventions included one or more of the following:
 - Educational brochures, including culturally-relevant materials and photographs of skin cancer lesions
 - Sun-safety training of and role-modeling by lifeguards, aquatic instructors, and outdoor recreation staff
 - Sun-safety lessons, interactive activities, and incentives for parents and children
 - Increasing available shaded areas
 - Provision of sunscreen
 - Point-of-purchase prompts.

Findings from the systematic review

Search results:

- 6000+ titles and citations screened
- 159 articles reviewed
- 85 studies included in one of the 13 motor vehicle injury reviews
- 11 qualifying studies
- Recommendation was based on sufficient evidence of improvement in adult sun-protective "covering up" behavior (e.g. wearing protective clothing – hat, shirt, cover-up garment, or pants)
- Of 11 studies initially identified by the Task Force for review, 5 studies were determined to be within the best evidence subset. Among these 5 studies, the median relative increase in sun-protective "covering-up" behavior was 11.2%.
- Interventions were found to be effective in a range of settings such as parks and pools
- Limitations of this review included insufficient evidence to determine effectiveness of educational and policy approaches in recreational settings for *children's* sun-protective "covering up" behavior because of inconsistent evidence.

Publications:

- **MMWR/Recommendations and Reports** – Fall 2003. A summary report on findings.
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The Guide to Community Preventive Services (Community Guide) provides recommendations on population-based interventions to promote health and to prevent disease, injury, disability, and premature death, appropriate for use by communities and healthcare systems. For more information about the Community Guide (including links to publications and a variety of resources) see www.thecommunityguide.org and for more information about Task Force findings on skin cancer prevention see www.thecommunityguide.org/cancer/

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